

Value-Related Issues in a Departmental Merit Pay Plan

Larry G. Hanshaw
University of Mississippi

Abstract

This article presents a faculty-designed merit pay plan along with a discussion of some of its perceived values. The merit pay plan discussed here advocates that (1) there is a need among teacher education faculty to have control over the design and implementation of any merit pay process that evaluates and rewards the value-laden work they perform, and (2) for merit pay purposes, teacher educators ought to consider giving a higher point value (i.e., evaluation of merit) to the various types of applied activities that are central to the school-university missions and programs within schools of education. Suggested improvements to the plan presented are offered throughout the paper within the context of apparent values imbedded in a typical merit pay process used to reward faculty achievements and contributions. Teacher education faculty, in particular, may find the discussion of this plan useful in relation to elements of already existing plans or future ones.

Historically, merit pay plans have not been accepted among most educators at any level (Urbansky, 1997; Balkin, 1996; Johnson, 1984), have lacked precise measurement and have created teacher motivation problems (Charnofsky, Cherny, Kegley, & Whitney, 1997; Twomey, 1993; Ellis, 1984; Wilcox, 1999), and have encountered legal challenges from higher education faculty (Euben, 2003). Nevertheless, the merit pay plan described here represents what has happened among one group of teacher education faculty who were allowed to design and implement a plan that incorporated faculty governance and values. For these reasons, it is likely that this plan and its perceived values may reflect the values and views held by other faculty here and elsewhere and may, simultaneously, underscore faculty control as a key element of this contentious process.

Purpose

This paper presents two ideas: (1) an integrated discussion of generally perceived values imbedded in a functioning merit pay plan and (2) an outline and discussion of the components of a faculty-designed merit pay plan. Statements and interpretations about the connection between merit pay and faculty values will focus, in this

case, on a point system (i.e., points as a proxy for merit) employed to reward the performance of participating teacher education faculty across the areas of teaching, research, and service. The second focus of this paper will explore suggestions for how realignment of the points used within the aforementioned plan might better balance merit awards for teacher education faculty who perform both scholarly and *applied tasks* as part of their professional duties on college and university campuses.

Merit Pay in a Value-related Context

Merit pay is defined here as a process that may produce a pay increase for university faculty who perform a variety of worthwhile work activities according to the practices, policies, criteria, and values of certain stakeholders. The merit pay plan derived from this definition dates back to 1994 and it has undergone several faculty and administrative revisions since then (Peggy Emerson, personal communication, December, 1994). Although designed with some administrative guidance, this plan reflects the collective values and votes of teacher education faculty in only one department within a school of education. The evolution of merit pay plans at other institutions may likely be different. Nevertheless, as a tenured

faculty member and a long serving member of our teacher education merit pay committee, I have had some time to formulate a perspective regarding faculty values apparently imbedded within the plan described in this paper. These experiences and insights also have fostered ideas that might help to improve this particular plan or similar ones affecting other education faculty.

A few brief descriptions of *merit pay* were presented in a nationwide survey (<http://fermi.bgsu.edu/~stoner/AAUP/merit.htm>). conducted by the American Association of University Professors (Stoner, 1996). This report provided insights about merit pay at various higher education institutions. Although details of the plans were, understandably, somewhat sketchy, faculty statements about merit pay sketched a portrait of values related to rewards for tasks that were most and least rewarded. Inductively, it also underscored the commonality in values among faculty at many other institutions regarding the topic of merit pay. Moreover, it aided in giving an accurate interpretation to many of the values imbedded in the merit pay plan discussed in this article and the teacher educators at this institution.

The term “merit” to most educators is a performance-based metric that implies that something “special” was accomplished; something “over and above the call of duty” was done; or that something “of high value or regard” was the result of one’s use of time. This sense of merit also could mean that a great *volume* and mixture of both common and extraordinary tasks were performed in tandem and/or done singularly well. Thus, merit pay plans appear to exist within a complex value-laden context that also helps to establish its commonsense meaning. This value-based meaning of merit, in turn, shapes the rewards that might accrue from the quality and quantity of work that gets performed. Related factors such as administrative assessments of faculty tasks, length of service, gender-gap catch-up decisions, and college board mandates also may come together, at times, to complicate, even more, what is meritorious.

Unfortunately, many merit pay processes have been apparently cloaked in secrecy; a point made

clear from the 1996 AAUP survey mentioned earlier. One might safely conclude, then, that when secrecy is evident in a merit pay process, it invariably engenders a distrust of and distaste for merit pay. Secrecy also offers very little guidance as to how one’s work actually achieves or fails to achieve merit status. Ultimately, if merit pay is to become a trusted and respected process, then it will be critical to have a multi-level valuing process that is free of secrecy and balanced with regard to faculty and administrative input. Clearly, other issues like last minute administrative adjustments to merit pay committee calculations, the influence of cliques, and the appearance of cronyism tend to un-level the merit pay playing field. However, such issues likely will become less of a concern to faculty when decisions about “who gets what” can be directly traced to a merit process that (1) is known in detail and ahead of time by affected faculty, and (2) exists in writing. These are some of the issues our faculty have to a degree addressed, even though some issues remain a work-in-progress. The broader issue that remains, however, is to recognize the importance of the interaction of individual values and those of the organization to which that person belongs. From this perspective, the definition of values and value systems and how these cohorts relate either to the individual or to an organization is important to understand. Razik and Swanson (2001, p. 361) point out that “Values reflect the world view (philosophy) of an individual or organization (Hall, Kalven, Rosen, & Taylor, 1990). They are consciously or unconsciously held priorities that are expressed in all human activity. A value system is an enduring organization of values along a continuum of relative importance (Ro-keach, 1973).” When applied to teacher education, for example, this reasoning seems to imply that some important tasks are more important than others. If a point system is then overlaid on the continuum of what is least to most important, then merit pay may result from the performance of tasks that are highly valued by either an organization (i.e., department, school, or university), an individual faculty member, or both of these entities. That is, the activities that are “collectively

valued" and assigned correspondingly high point values also are the most likely activities in which most faculty will invest their time and creative energies. Thus, at doctoral- and research-level universities, this has been and still is a well-known expectation of university faculty. For example, Glover (cited in Sawyer, Prichard, and Hostetler, 1992, p. 259) states that "where I once believed instruction was the most important part of a professor's career, I now believe the publication of scholarly works is more important than teaching." Such sentiments and expectations also may explain why a published book might earn a faculty member more points than several refereed journal articles. Or, why a six-figure grant may garner more points than a superior rating for teaching difficult material in either an undergrad-

uate and/or a graduate class. Obviously, service and teaching count towards merit pay considerations, but neither service nor teaching, in head-to-head battles with books, large grants, or published journal articles, will tend to produce the same consideration, points, or prestige as their task-related cousins. This point is reiterated by Kelly (cited in Sawyer, Prichard, & Hostetler, 1992, p. 284) when he states that "[Publish or perish]"(brackets my own) is not just an idle threat; it is a fact of life in most major institutions of higher learning, and no amount of high quality teaching or important service is normally accepted as a substitute for research publications." This same value system is apparent in the hierarchy of points presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Points Assigned to Most Valued Faculty Activities

Activity	Points per item
Books	6
Refereed articles; book chapters	3
Chairing, co-chairing committees; dissertations	3
External grants	5
All other activities listed on Faculty Activity Report	1

Points-based merit pay plans, therefore, appear to be a way to represent collective faculty and administrative value judgments. The confluence of these judgments interact across the intrinsic and extrinsic components of individual goal orientations and affect the work of faculty in the areas of teaching, research, and service (Pintrich, 1990). As a result, reaching one's goals and being recognized for involvement in activities important to a department or school (Sawyer, Prichard, & Hostetler, 1992) may offer each faculty member an opportunity to achieve milestones related to, but much beyond, occasional merit pay (i.e., career stabilizers such as achievement of tenure, promotion, or recognition as a scholarly expert). On the other hand, the value judgments embodied in such plans also subtly communicate that there is

much that can be lost if the game is not played a certain way (Sawyer, Prichard, & Hostetler, 1992). Earning merit pay, even if tenure and promotion are not at stake, is an effort all tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty face as they attempt to balance individual plans and values against the plans and values represented by an organization's goals and objectives (J. E. Chambliss, personal communication, November, 1999).

Further complicating the above balancing act is the necessity of faculty to justify their job activities and programmatic involvements against the ever present pressures and perspectives of other interested parties (i.e., university administrative leadership, state legislatures, the scrutinizing public, and state and national accrediting agencies). All of these stakeholders, in some way, exert

their own levels of influence that, in turn, affect public opinion (Senate Bill No. 2156, Mississippi Legislature, 1999; The Holmes Group, 1995). This point is important since “every aspect of teacher education is influenced by the public view of the importance of teaching” (Corrigan & Haberman, 1990, p. 205).

Historically, teacher education faculty, like most other faculty, seem to feel a special need to carefully choose the activities in which they place the highest value so that they might not seem conspicuously different from other professionals in the university community (Hawley, 1990). For example, to give equal value (i.e., merit points) to the time and effort spent supervising new teachers compared to the time and effort spent publishing refereed articles and/or books is a fine line for teacher educators to walk; especially since equating “applied” activities with some of the aforementioned scholarly efforts *might* make teacher educators appear to be less professional than (our) science and liberal arts counterparts across the university (Corrigan and Haberman, 1990, pp. 195–208). Such comparisons appear to have serious merit. After all, is not the preparation of new teachers a complex, time consuming, and socially important activity that is worthy of being as equally rewarded as publications or refereed journal articles? What about the time and effort required to: (1) establish and to maintain effective school-university partnerships; (2) arrange and to supervise student action research activities and practicums; (3) prepare departmental folios for national accrediting agencies; or (4) supervise nine student teachers; some at sites requiring more than an hour of travel one-way? These types of applied tasks are the “bread and butter” activities that historically and currently define the missions of many schools of education. Such tasks also are the exemplary activities that may improve teaching and teacher education programs; at least, according to the generally well-known views of certain organizations that work to improve the preparation of teachers and teaching along with schools of education (The Holmes Report, 1995; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), 2002).

An examination of information about merit pay plans in the literature (Stoner, 1996; Hansen, 1994) does not reveal how strongly a majority of teacher educators feel about the value of their bread and butter activities versus the value placed on the more established types of scholarly activities. With regard to time and effort spent on such activities, clearly, *teacher education faculty* ought to adopt a system that rewards, *at least equally*, publishing *and* the performance of applied activities like those listed above or implied in the above sources. Incidentally, comments by faculty in the AAUP article seem to support the conclusion here that “equal valuing” has historically not happened; especially since teacher educators, in this case, apparently have found it hard to bestow their highest sense of value upon the “applied” dimension of their professional existence on college campuses (Corrigan & Haberman 1990; Holmes Group, 1986).

Again, teacher educators, within merit pay plans, ought to value more highly the applied aspects of their profession. In the long run, this may tend to off-set the apparent fear of perhaps losing either the respect of peers outside of and within the ranks of teacher education (Corrigan and Haberman, 1990). Giving their *bread and butter activities* a higher value at least equal to publications is perhaps one way teacher educators can self-adjust the status of applied activities and their collective value systems as well.

These contrasting value positions within and beyond teacher education remain today and indicate that the tensions between faculty values within a given department regarding merit pay will have to be resolved overtime. Teacher educators here simply decided to proceed with the present merit pay plan and to let future revisions be decided by faculty at that time.

The current (and past) criteria of teacher education accrediting agencies and the notion that “teacher educators don’t spend enough time in K–12 schools to know what is going on” is rationale enough to create a new value system within merit pay plans. Such a value system would immediately become aligned with the “on-site” presence currently typical of teacher education

faculty and school-university partnerships within today's schools (i.e., Holmes Group, 1990; Continuing Accreditation Institutional Report, 2002). This new value system also might elevate field-based activities to a status comparable to certain scholarly activities. This point is especially relevant now that schools of education and local education agencies appear to be more on the same page with regard to how tomorrow's teachers should be educated and trained (Proposed NCATE 2000 Standards [i.e., 3 and 6], October, 1999). In light of their relationship to the continued accreditation of schools of education, applied activities could justifiably be elevated to a higher status within value-driven merit pay plans.

The Faculty Activity Report

As mentioned earlier, Table 1 shows a list of points related to priority job activities that are part of a larger list of faculty activities found in a document known commonly as a "Faculty Activity Report" (FAR). The FAR at this university is part of a reporting system that other universities also may use. This document primarily creates a record of what faculty have accomplished and, indirectly, shows how faculty spent their time. Table 2 presents an outline of categories relating to activities in the areas of teaching, research, and service. However, the FAR at this university in no way implies that all other universities rely on an identical instrument. Moreover, since the point values assigned to the activities in Table 1 are the result of faculty decisions (i.e., votes) unique to only one group of teacher education faculty, then such a hierarchy of points may not be representative of other merit pay approaches either among other departments here or at other institutions. In the final analysis, the development, implementation, and acceptance of a given merit pay plan must reflect the values of the faculty affected by the plan, if it is to become an effective reward mechanism. Although the merit pay plan presented here broadly reflects the collective values of our teacher education faculty at this time, it likely will be revisited, as in years past, to ensure both its continued effectiveness and faculty support.

Faculty Governance, Funding, and Administrative Policy Toward Merit Pay

Over the years, the majority of teacher education faculty at this institution voluntarily have endorsed and participated in our merit pay plan because we were its architect. Although adequate funding makes merit pay a meaningful process in which to engage, faculty governance may provide faculty an even more meaningful opportunity to decide such things as the percentages that will apply to particular components within a given plan. This has been the case for our teacher education faculty. Hence, faculty control is and continues to be a powerful element in the design and acceptance of merit pay, regardless of the actual level of funding. On the other hand, at the level of the office of the dean and above, institutional policy regarding merit pay has consistently favored strong faculty governance at the departmental level. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the school of education's leadership has actively campaigned for adequate merit funding because of credit hour production levels, the number of doctoral students graduated, and the general growth of all programs in the school of education. In general, therefore, the campus administration's policy position toward merit pay and other types of funding recently has tended to favor the school of education. Within the school of education, evaluations of the performance of the teacher education program have clearly indicated to stakeholders concerned about budgets and accountability that there is a value-laden balance involving factors such as (1) education and teacher education faculty accomplishments (i.e., as cited in the FAR), (2) traditional priorities held within the academic community affecting teacher educators (i.e., teaching, research, and service) and (3) the public's perceptions of the work teacher educators are doing to prepare teachers for today's schools (i.e., 2001-2002 Annual Performance Report, November 2002). Moreover, achieving successful NCATE accreditation and producing teacher education graduates who consistently get and keep K-12 teaching positions is evidence that the performance of teacher education faculty and our graduates justifies merit pay,

Table 2
Descriptive Outline of Major Faculty Activity Report Categories

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| 1. | Teaching. Includes such activities as courses taught, directed theses and dissertations, other supervision activities, field studies, off-campus courses taught, independent study courses, innovative new courses, redeveloped courses, teaching awards, and student evaluations different from those available to the department chair and dean. |
| 2. | Other Services to Students. Undergraduate advising, number of such sessions, registration services rendered, services to graduate students, including special help provided, letters of recommendation, other letters, job placement activities, and other services not listed on the Faculty Activity Report. |
| 3. | Research. Complete citations for refereed and non-refereed journal articles, papers presented at professional meetings (state, regional, national, and international levels), papers submitted for publication or presentation, citations for books, chapters in books, monographs, electronic and other media / software developed, grants and contracts received, reports for funding agencies, grant proposals submitted, unsponsored research, patents received / pending, and other research activities not included above. |
| 4.-5. | Performing Arts and Visual Arts (not relevant to school of education faculty). |
| 6. | Clinical Activities. Supply description of activities, personnel involved, and time involved. |
| 7. | Service. Service to the department, school, or college; service to the university; service to external constituencies of the university; service to your academic discipline; consulting related to your position; and other service. |
| 8. | Professional Development and Activities. Honors received, post-doctoral study, professional development, and Other. |
| 9.-10. | Plans for Teaching, Research, and Service for the Coming Year and Narrative Comments (on current year activities not already described). Informational; not point producing items. |
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in spite of any tensions or differences in values that may continue to exist among various stakeholders concerned about teacher education issues. The message: merit pay is deserved and will not likely be a policy issue as long as teacher educators continue to balance personal performance and programmatic expectations. Some tensions may always surround merit pay, but for now, it is likely to remain the mechanism by which teacher education faculty here will receive a pay increase in relation to job performance (i.e., regardless of the adequacy of state revenues). This, of course, may not be the fate of merit pay plans in other states or at other institutions.

The MPC and the Intersection of Values

The Merit Pay Committee (MPC) described here is a faculty-driven committee that calculates merit pay for all participating faculty (i.e., according to a process approved by the faculty with input from the dean). It administers any changes

to the merit plan as a result of faculty votes. In my six years of experience helping to develop, refine, and administer this department's merit pay plan, some faculty have stated, and perhaps justifiably, that no merit pay system can measure how well individual faculty teach, mentor, and respect students relative to their professional peers in the same department. Moreover, it is often pointed out, "getting the job done" includes other variables that don't get considered. A case in point is the consummate team player who models the *dispositions* that show the rest of us how to mentor and to treat fellow faculty members. If dispositions of this type are important to the development of prospective teachers (Wasicsko, 2002), then they must be equally important for faculty to model among themselves. Although an important quality within the cooperative world of teacher education, few proponents of the above view offer a reliable metric to quantify such variables. Right now, however, merit pay is tied to the FAR, and

the FAR does not remotely reference such interpersonal qualities in ways that would assist in rewarding merit pay.

Quality of work comparisons are important. But so too are ideas such as the one by Blake and Mouton (1985) who point out that the ones most likely to receive the greatest merit rewards, seemingly in spite of person to person comparisons, will be "those who contributed most to the corporation's success" (pp. 137-139). This corporate world idea is a striking parallel to the message given to our faculty regarding merit pay and its relationship to the goals and objectives of the school of education (J. E. Chambliss, personal communication, 1999).

Some issues and their place in a discussion of merit pay no doubt sound naive. Nevertheless, many of the activities alluded to above do consume much of a teacher educator's time and creative energies, but, yet, don't enter into the total merit pay picture. For one thing, many activities in teacher education are both routine and essential and require that people work together and share responsibilities in order to accomplish many related tasks. Thus, separating individual accomplishments from those of colleagues can be divisive and counterproductive for a group of people who work in such a cooperative world. In this context, arriving at merit pay for individuals and achieving such to the satisfaction of all contributing parties is a challenge to overcome, given the individualistic nature of merit pay (<http://fermi.bgsu.edu/~stoner/AAUP/merit.htm>, page 2 of 5).

In addition to being sensitive to faculty issues and perspectives, the MPC's other major function is to adhere to the guidelines and criteria approved by a vote of the faculty in order to calculate the amount of merit pay earned by all eligible and participating faculty. A similar faculty vote is needed either to adopt changes to a previous year's plan or to implement a recommendation from the MPC or any individual faculty member. Service on the MPC can be the result of a faculty vote and/or appointments by the department chairperson. Appointments by the chairperson assures equal representation for all program areas

(i.e., Special, Elementary, and Secondary Education). In addition to the faculty, the committee also takes a substantial part of its charge from the input and guidance of the department chair and the dean of the school. As seen in Table 3, the chairperson accounts for about ten percent of points that a faculty member can earn. The chair's evaluation primarily focuses on documented information in a required portfolio that, for the chair's use, is considered in tandem with the same information in the FAR. The chair's evaluation is a rubric and points-based assessment of the extent to which a faculty member has contributed to certain programmatic departmental or unit (i.e., school of education) goals, objectives, and activities. The dean's input into this process usually emphasizes unit objectives and goals and this is communicated to the committee by the departmental chairperson. The dean also indicates the amount of money that will be available for merit pay in any given year and apprizes all unit faculty of any administrative factors or university-wide mandates that must be accounted for in the faculty's overall plan. As indicated earlier, the faculty is left to its own devices to design a response to any administrative mandates and this has given our plan a reasonable degree of faculty governance.

All instructors, tenured faculty, and tenure-track faculty are eligible to participate in the departmental plan. Individual faculty, however, retain the right not to participate in any part of the merit pay plan. If this option is chosen by the deadline for such decisions, then the potential dollar contribution of that part of the plan will be lost by that faculty member. Thus, that sum of money remains in the "pot" of funds related to the affected component of the plan. Compensation a faculty member earns as a result advancements such as tenure and/or promotion is handled differently because these latter issues of merit are part of a separate process. Receiving tenure and/or promotion, however, can generate merit points by including such achievements in the "honors/awards" category of the FAR. Other than as described and because tenure and promotion are awarded by the state's Institutions of Higher

Table 3
Major Components Within A Functioning Merit Pay Plan

Faculty member _____

Date _____

1. Pay Distribution Based On Salary

_____ x _____ = _____

(Individual's salary) x earned fraction (.5) x amount of money available for merit pay of participating faculty.)

2. Self-Evaluation (Faculty Activity Report)

_____ x (.4) x _____ = _____

(Individual's points ÷ Total departmental points) x (.4) x (amount of money available for merit pay).

3. Chairperson's Evaluation

_____ x (.1) x _____ = _____

(Individual's points ÷ Total departmental points) x (.1) x (amount of money available for merit pay)

Note: Chair's evaluation is rubric-based and related to programmatic considerations.

4. Total

_____ + _____ + _____ = Final Total

(Salary sum) (Self-evaluation) (Chair's Evaluation)

Learning Board, achievements of this type fall outside the scope of this paper's discussion of merit pay (i.e., promotion carries its own financial reward).

The MPC also attempts to find ways to improve the way such plans attempt to reward participating faculty. For example, general perceptions about "across-the-board raises" is one area within the concept of merit pay that continues to need attention. Specifically, calculating across-the-board raises based upon the percent of one's salary relative to the overall budget in a given department sometimes creates friction among some faculty. This friction often gets compounded if that faculty member's salary is already high and his or her performance is not the very best among all who seek their portion of available merit funding. Such friction gets abated some by an administrative preference toward rewarding "program builders" (i.e., faculty who have been on-board and helped to build the current program long before "merit pay" was available to compensate such faculty for their previous years' contributions to the department or school). Most agree

that this is fair, even though friction is still there. This form of reward usually gets the support of the majority of faculty who have been around longer and have attained tenure. Untenured faculty, attempting to achieve tenure and/or promotion, often seem to work as hard or harder than most and don't get rewarded as much in the "across-the-board column" as do their more senior colleagues (i.e., recent hires often have lower salaries). Fair or not, this is the way the above plan works. However, any system or plan can be improved. Although well-intentioned, across-the-board raises have not been universally accepted as a measure of "individual merit" in the traditional sense. Nevertheless, most faculty silently accept the money (i.e., as a cost of living raise) probably, in part, because any additional pay increase helps these days. Also, not much ire is raised because faculty really do not *compete* for this portion of a given pay increase. That is, there is no competition or points that could have been earned. The across-the-board raise has traditionally been based upon one's base salary in relation to the allocated sum for merit pay. This aspect of

the present plan continues to spark vigorous debate among our teacher education faculty, but we agreed to let voting determine various features of the plan and by doing so, tensions among us might be minimized.

Teacher educators do, however, compete with other units for funds within a university's structure. In this sense, high credit hour production, high graduation rates, and competent products (i.e., newly certified teachers), among other factors, weigh favorably against a general lack of understanding by critics of higher education who wonder what teacher educators do and by what criteria they measure their programs and themselves. For example, teacher educators compete against a less than professional perception of ourselves in the minds of some political forces that somehow conclude that we are overpaid in higher education. Certainly, these are important philosophical and ideological differences between camps of people concerned about public higher education. Nevertheless, perceptions to some people become truth and, given the mediocre sums allotted in recent years for salary increases in higher education, it is practically a matter of common sense to accept across-the-board raises within a merit pay scheme when there is little or no serious opposition to the idea from peers. It may be arguable that such reasoning dodges the issue of whether or not across-the-board compensation is a form of merit pay. However, in these tight financial times and without adequate funding, merit pay often becomes meaningless when the difference between a merit and a non-merit award is a matter of pennies. Translation: why, financially speaking, cut off your nose to spite your face? This may help to explain the various ways "merit" has come to be understood, accepted, and differently valued as a concept within various reward schemes.

In addition to across-the-board raises, a second type of skewness within this plan is the weighted value of certain faculty activities. These weighted differences can be traced back to long held *perceptions* adopted among education faculty and *teacher educators*, generally, that "refereed publications" are, far and away, more meritorious

accomplishments than other basic or staple activities in which university faculty engage (Glover, 1990). These staple activities include such as things as (1) establishing and supporting collaboration between school personnel and university teacher educators in a joint effort to provide pre-teaching and student teaching experiences in a "real-world" school setting; (2) modeling emerging practice and providing mentoring support in clinical situations for student teachers; (3) first-year support and monitoring for new or novice teachers, and (4) the continued education and training of the existing K-12 teaching and administrative community (Wise & Leibbrand, 2001). The aforementioned items only hint at what teacher educators do *with and for others* and does not include what they have to do to maintain their own levels of expertise and continued professional development. Hence, in addition to publishing, there are program emphases advocated by *oversight agencies* as well as schools of education. Critics of the idea that teacher educators deserve a well-funded merit pay "pot" must remember that, by today's standards, if schools of education fail to actively place themselves in school classrooms and, once there, practice what they profess in college classes, no amount of published articles or books will secure being accredited. From this point of view, the aforementioned merit attached to producing "scholarly" activities now takes on a much different stature in comparison to applied activities. Therefore, the suggestion made earlier that the merit points for these two different activities at least be made equal is, arguably, justified. The point here is that important traditional measures such as books and refereed articles are not the only things of stature and merit that have to be accomplished. The question now is: should not the points for *applied activities* be raised, given their present importance and the amount of time these activities consume? In spite of protestations, points awarded for the accomplishment of publication-related activities continue to be *higher* versus those points allotted for accomplishing activities that are supposed to be the *raison d'être* for teacher educators. Involvement in preparing teachers-to-be on the one hand and the realities

associated with publishing articles on the other have created a perceived inequity within a reward system that some feel needs fine tuning. Although this perceived skewness must first be addressed among faculty, merit pay, however, will continue to be awarded by *someone's system* whether or not certain quirks get ironed out. In other words, on a much larger scale, the accountability of all educators, including those in higher education, was being called into question. Relative to this state's universities, such concerns were transformed into (IHL) board policy to satisfy political pressures. This was the "first domino" that made merit pay an issue, at least here in Mississippi in the mid-nineties. Next to accountability, requests for higher salaries needed to retain higher education faculty simply exacerbated the situation. Giving faculty the responsibility of developing merit pay plans was, arguably, an administrative policy position that allowed university faculty to address the issue of accountability that was squarely directed at faculty. Now, the administrative leadership at the various institutions point to merit pay plans on their campuses. This narrow slice of an overall policy position that presently favors merit pay in some form has quieted critics who earlier questioned the accountability of university faculty and the levels of support for faculty salaries sought from the legislature. Currently, however, merit pay is about to be subsumed under an effort to bring all of the state's universities up to the average salary of the Southern Universities' Group (SUG) for all academic ranks. This effectively puts merit pay on the backburner, since a salary increase realized from reaching the SUG average would be, technically, a separate issue from merit pay. Consequently, once salaries go up, many faculty likely will take notice that "all boats are about to rise." As such, few faculty may be inclined to actively contest percentages for an across-the-board raise versus other plan components. As has happened in the past, most faculty feel the sums will likely be too small to stress over anyway and so many will refocus on issues dominated by teaching classes, attending faculty meetings, preparing publications, doing committee work, and grading exams.

In spite of efforts to increase all salaries to the SUG average or the attitude of some faculty toward merit increases, merit pay *will likely* be thrust into the picture, since the intent of every previous "pay raise" since 1994 has been *not to divide* all allocated money as *equal* sums across-the-board. However, giving across-the-board raises as a component of an overall merit pay plan, as described earlier in this paper, has resulted in fewer tensions between faculty and administrators and, presumably, among various legislative and public entities that concern themselves with teacher education issues, including merit pay. The discussion in the next section provides details of an approach one group of faculty devised to award itself merit pay.

The Present Merit Pay System

In this article's *points-based* merit pay plan, some key activities and their points were shown in Table 1. The total points earned in each merit category is a function of the diversity of activities each faculty member performs. Starting with the faculty member's base salary (i.e., Pay Distribution According to Base Salary), a faculty member can earn an across-the-board pay increase. To this amount, additional money can be earned via the FAR-Self Evaluation (i.e., includes Teaching, Research, and Service) and the Chair's Evaluation. Finally, each of these categories split any available merit funds according to percentages specified by faculty vote. For example, in a recent implementation, Pay Distribution Based upon Salary (an Across-the-board raise), FAR-Self Evaluation, and the Chair's Evaluation each garnered 50%, 40%, and 10% shares, respectively, of funds made available for merit pay. These percent levels have varied, however, by departmental vote several times since 1994 (i.e., affecting teacher education faculty only). Other departments in the school of education have their own plans.

With the exception of Pay Based on Base Salary, the points-based process within our merit pay plan starts by first dividing the total points each faculty member earns in a given category by the total points earned by all participating faculty for that category. Next, the previous step's frac-

tion would be multiplied by the designated percent for that category and then by the sum of money available for merit distribution. This would yield the merit pay for that component. The number indicating the sum of money to be distributed for merit pay has historically come to the MPC from the dean's office. The MPC then applies the particular percentages designated by the faculty for each of the three major components shown earlier in Table 3.

Even though some disagreements about the current merit pay plan remain (i.e., debates about the points earned performing applied activities versus scholarly ones), the plan itself is a benchmark from which future changes can be measured. Nevertheless, the majority of our teacher education faculty have voluntarily participated in the current process in every year in which there was funding since 1994. This indicates that there is acceptance of the plan, even though there are still some wrinkles (i.e., adequate travel funds in the overall budget needed to enhance conference presentation opportunities) and internal tensions that are yet to be resolved (i.e., salary compression issues involving new hires and the salaries of more senior faculty). Even though this plan is only one among many, other faculty addressing the issue of merit pay plans may benefit in some way from the value-related perspectives discussed in this paper. Particularly, these perspectives may help to resolve some of the aforementioned issues and tensions faced by teacher educators and other university faculty who must work toward achieving an integral role in the design and management of this important, but controversial, process so that faculty values will be strongly represented within the merit pay plan that emerges.

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